

University of Maryland Baltimore School of Medicine Center for Disability Justice(CDJ) Pilot Research Grant

Eligibility Criteria & Guidelines for Submission

Please review ALL criteria and guidelines below prior to and during the preparation of the Project Proposal. Thank you!

Aim of the UMSOM CDJ Pilot Research Grant:

The University of Maryland Baltimore, School of Medicine, Center for Disability Justice (UMSOM CDJ), supported by the Department of Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation Science, is celebrating its first anniversary by investing in early-stage researchers to expand research about disability and health equity.

The CDJ will provide pilot funding for early-career faculty and staff conducting research related to health equity who wish to enhance or refocus an ongoing project on disability research. The goal of this funding is to expand research on disability and/or capture more data about disability status. While the CDJ focuses on mobility disability, especially as it pertains to older adults and communities in Southwest Baltimore, applicants are invited to focus on any scope of disability research. The awardee will have access to an extensive network of support and institutional resources for enhancing their career development experiences, including but not limited to biostatistical consultation, qualitative research consultations, and mentorship to support transitioning grants to extramural funding.

The UMSOM CDJ will consider funding one research award with a total budget of \$20,000 in direct costs to be expended within one year. This funding is not to be used for salary support for the principal investigator or co-investigators. Funds must be spent in accordance with UMB policy.

Key Definitions for this RFA:

Health Disparity (as defined by the NIH):

A health disparity (HD) is a health difference that adversely affects disadvantaged populations, based on one or more of the following health outcomes:

- Higher incidence and/or prevalence and earlier onset of disease
- Higher prevalence of risk factors, unhealthy behaviors, or clinical measures in the causal pathway of a disease outcome
- Higher rates of condition-specific symptoms, reduced global daily functioning, or self-reported health-related quality of life using standardized measures
- Premature and/or excessive mortality from diseases where population rates differ
- Greater global burden of disease using a standardized metric

Disability (as defined by the ADA):

A person with a disability is someone who:

- has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities,
- has a history or record of such an impairment (such as cancer that is in remission), or
- is perceived by others as having such an impairment (such as a person who has scars from a severe burn)

Health Equity (as defined by the CDC):

Health equity is the state in which everyone has a fair and just opportunity to attain their highest level of health. Factors affecting health equity include:

- Social determinants of health (SDOH)
- Social and community context

- Healthcare access and use
- Neighborhood and physical environment
- Workplace conditions
- Education
- Income and wealth gaps

Eligibility for new applicants:

Candidates who are eligible to apply for the UMSOM CDJ pilot project funding are:

- 1) Junior faculty or staff at the University of Maryland, Baltimore who are:
 - a. Affiliates of the UMSOM CDJ and:
 - i. Meet the criteria of Early Stage Investigator or New Investigator status and/or meet the University of Maryland's criteria for PI status on research projects.
 - ii. Wish to refocus their current research on disability and/or expand their current research to capture more data about disability. Some examples may include:
 1. Researchers who wish to expand data collection about experiences with disability after cancer treatment
 2. Adding qualitative interviews to evaluate lived experiences with disability to an existing research project
 - iii. Can outline a clear plan for using their pilot research to support an extramural grant application.

Post-doctoral fellows are not eligible, unless they transition to faculty within one year. For those in this situation, written documentation of the faculty appointment (including effective date) must be submitted with the full application.

Application Process and Deadlines:

There is no Letter of Intent (LOI) for this RFA.

The application will be open for three months from September 24th to December 12th, and applicants will be notified of their application status in early February.

All applications are due by 5:00 pm EST on December 12th, 2025. Please submit a full application to CDJ@som.umaryland.edu.

Applications will be reviewed by a panel of Center Faculty, Center Affiliated Faculty, Center Staff, and Community Advisory Board members. Ad Hoc members may be recruited to support the review where additional expertise may be needed.

Full Proposal Guidelines for Submission of CDJ Proposals

Proposals should be organized as a 'mini' NIH grant. A complete application package should include:

1. A lay language abstract intended for a community audience (~1/2 page, no more than 250 words)
2. Components and Organization of the Body of the Proposal, ***not to exceed five pages***
 - a. A statement describing how the project will contribute to advancing disability health research, including short-term and long-term goals (~1/2page)
 - b. Specific Aims (~1/2 page)
 - i. What is the hypothesis being tested/novel method being developed, and why is it important to progress in the field?
 - ii. What are your specific objectives for this project?
 - c. Approach of the proposed disabilities disparities-related project (~2 pages)
 - i. Significance/ Innovation (~1 page):
 1. Briefly, critically evaluate the literature, stating what is known and what gap in knowledge you are addressing.
 2. Explain how the project seeks to shift current research or clinical practice and how concepts or approaches.
 3. Describe how this research aligns with the [goals of the Center for Disability Justice](#).
 - ii. Approach: Experimental Design and Methods (~1 page)
 1. What are you planning to do and how? (Note: detailed methods are not needed unless new and/or critical to the research plan.)
 2. How will the data be evaluated?
 3. What are the expected results and potential pitfalls?
 4. How will you prioritize experiments? Please include a project timeline.
**All proposals must be compliant with institutional and NIH requirements for the use of animals in research, with IACUC protocol approval for experiments with animals before funding can be released. Similarly, the involvement of human subjects or tissues must have IRB approval before the start of the project.*
 - d. Community Partnership (~1 page)
 - i. How will community partners contribute to/participate:
 1. In the design of this project?
 2. In the execution of this project?
 3. In the dissemination of findings?
 - e. Research Planning (~1 page)
 - i. What is the timeline for the proposed research project?
 - ii. How will this project contribute to future research? What are your plans for utilizing this pilot data for further research?
3. Budget and budget justification
 - a. Allowable costs may include supplies, software, travel, and/or other expenses. Funds may not be used for the purchase of any large equipment.
 - b. Please note that CDJ grants do not pay indirect costs within UMB or outside.
 - c. Please provide a simple breakdown of the budget and justification.
 - d. Please identify the approximate percent effort the PI will contribute to this project and how that will be supported by their Department or Center.
4. Biosketches for all identified key personnel.
5. Two letters of support. Preference for at least one letter from a community partner.

6. If necessary, a letter from the respective UMB Department stating that the candidate will be joining its faculty within the year.

Award Selection:

Applications will be reviewed in a [NIH-like review process](#) comprised of CDJ investigators, CDJ Affiliates, and Community Advisory Board Members who have expertise relevant to the submitted proposals. Ad Hoc members may be invited to review as subject matter experts.

1. The first level of review will be a peer review comprised of CDJ investigators, affiliates, and other subject matter experts as needed.
2. The second level of review will be the advisory council review conducted by a panel of the UMSOM CDJ Community Advisory Board members.

Each proposal will be evaluated using the NIH 9-point rating scale (1 = exceptional; 9 = poor) scoring system **and receive a separate score** based on the strengths and weaknesses for each of three core review criteria (Significance and Innovation, Rigor of the approach, and Resources/Expertise to complete the study).

Applications will be scored based on the potential community impact and community relevance using the following criteria:

- 1) Does the project focus on disability health and the intersection with health disparities?
- 2) Is the project likely to support the grantee's transition to extramural funding?
- 3) Is there meaningful engagement with community partners throughout the project development, execution, and dissemination?
- 4) Is the lay abstract written in language understandable to a non-specialist audience?
- 5) Does the project address an important problem or a critical barrier to progress in the field of disability research?
- 6) Does the application challenge and seek to shift current research or clinical practice paradigms by utilizing novel theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions?
- 7) Do the investigators have the expertise and support to complete the aims successfully?
- 8) To what extent will the work of this project benefit the local community in Baltimore and/or Maryland residents?